

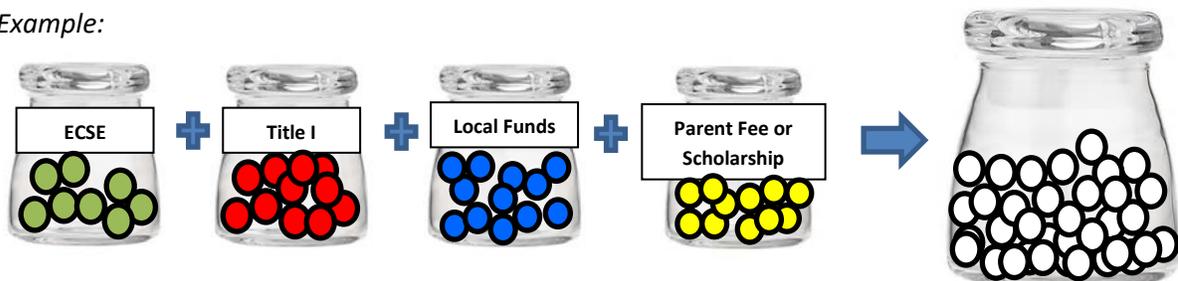
EARLY LEARNING BLENDED PROGRAMS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

This FAQ is a companion piece to the [Early Learning Blended Program](#) guidance document.

1. What is blended funding?

Blended programs occur when the educational costs for a group of children representing a variety of eligibility types are shared and supported by two or more funding sources. Contributions by funding source are allocated based on the projected number of participating eligible children.

Example:



2. Can Foundation Formula funds claimed for early learning services be used in an early learning blended program?

Foundation Formula funds claimed for early learning services can also be used to support costs associated with a blended program. Funds will be reported as local funds on the Early Learning Blended Plan. For specific information regarding eligibility requirements for claiming Foundation Formula for early learning students refer to the [PK Eligibility for State Aid](#) document provided by DESE, School Finance.

3. What costs are allowable for blended programs?

All funding sources included in a blended program may be used for the allowable expenditures listed in the Early Learning Blended Programs guidance document. The cost for these expenditures should apply to all children in the blended program. If the cost only applies to a specific child in the program (i.e. IEP required therapy), the cost is not a blended cost but rather an individual program cost and will need to be charged to that individual program.

4. Is there a budget application to complete for participation in a blended program?

Yes. An Early Learning Blended Plan and Budget Application are available each fiscal year in ePeGS. Both are scheduled to open April 15th and are due no later than July 1st for participation in a blended program.

5. Is there a tool to assist LEAs in determining the type and amount of funds to include in the blended program?

Yes. The Blended Program Worksheet is available on the Early Learning Blended Program webpage and can be used by the LEA to explore multiple scenarios for a blended program. Once the LEA chooses a

scenario that best meets their needs the information can then be loaded into the Initial Plan. The Initial Plan is part of the application process in ePeGs.

6. Will I be able to revise my blended initial budget?

Yes. Budgets may be amended after approval of the initial budget and are due no later than April 30th. However, budgeted amounts may not be reduced below the amount already paid to date.

7. How do I request funds budgeted in the blended program?

Payment requests for reimbursement of blended program costs may be submitted in ePeGs on a monthly basis once the Blended Plan and Budget have been submitted and approved. The payment request will open July 1st. If ECSE funds have been budgeted in the Blended Budget, these funds will not be paid out until the following fiscal year once the ECSE FER has been approved. A final payment request will be due no later than May 15th for all LEAs blending MPP funds. LEAs that do not blend MPP funds may submit payment requests through September 1st.

8. Will I be required to submit a Final Expenditure Report (FER) for the blended program?

Yes. All LEAs with an approved Blended Budget will be required to submit a FER in ePeGs to report final blended program costs. The FER will be utilized as the final payment request for any federal funds, other than ECSE federal funds, being pooled. The blended FER will be due no later than September 30th.

9. Is separate tracking of expenditures necessary for a blended program?

As the funds blended into the pool lose their individual identity, it is not necessary to track which pooled funding source paid for blended program expenditures. However, it is necessary to identify all blended program expenditures separately from other early learning non-blended expenditures in the general ledger. The Missouri Accounting Code structure to identify expenditures in the general ledger consists of the fund, function, object, location, source, and project code. In order to track blended program expenditures separately, the project code 40002 must be used for all blended program expenditures.

10. What defines an eligibility type for an Early Learning Blended Program?

There are three eligibility types identified in the Blended Plan:

- *ECSE eligibility – Children that have an IEP that requires preschool instructional services;*
- *Title I eligibility – Children who meet multiple criteria for Title I services;*
- *All Other eligibility – Children who do not meet the criteria for ECSE or Title I services. This would include children eligible for foundational formula, MPP, parent fee/scholarship or child care subsidies.*

An Early Learning Blended Program must identify children from multiple eligibility types to be considered a blended program.

11. How do I seek reimbursement for IEP required costs (e.g. therapy, equipment, transportation) for children in blended classrooms?

LEAs should request reimbursement for child specific costs through the ECSE FER in ePeGs, as these costs are not considered part of the blended classroom expenditures.

12. What is the age requirement for eligible children in a blended program?

Children 3-5 years of age are eligible to participate in the blended program. If MPP funds are used, all non-special education children must be 1-2 years away from kindergarten entry.

13. If the LEA receives a child with an IEP during the year can this child be included in a blended classroom?

- a. *If the IEP team determines preschool instructional services are needed, and the blended classroom is the appropriate setting for the child, then the child can be placed in the blended classroom as an ECSE child in the Early Learning Blended Plan. ECSE funds must be included in the blended pool to cover 100% of the per child costs.*
- b. *If the IEP team determines related services only are needed, those services are funded through ECSE and are not included in the blended budget. This child would not be reported in the Early Learning Blended Plan as an ECSE child.*

14. What if the LEA receives a child during the year with an IEP that requires preschool services but the blended classroom is full?

While the LEA must serve the child with an IEP, that child would not be placed in the blended classroom. The LEA may give priority to this child if an existing child drops from the classroom. A policy must be in place to outline enrollment criteria, including providing services to children with IEPs.

15. In a blended classroom, can tuition fees be charged to those children who are identified as Title I, Foundation Formula or ECSE?

No. However, if the IEP team determines that a child only needs related services and not preschool instructional services, tuition fees can be charged.

16. If children with IEPs are included in the blended classroom, does the classroom teacher need to have ECSE certification?

No. Teachers in the blended programs must have either EC certification or ECSE certification.

17. What is the difference between an integrated ECSE classroom and a blended classroom?

An integrated ECSE classroom must have a minimum of 10 children with at least 50% children with IEPs in order to receive ECSE reimbursement for a 1.0 FTE teacher. The classroom teacher must have ECSE certification.

A blended classroom must have a minimum of 10 children, but may have less than 50% children with IEPs. The amount of ECSE state reimbursement received for blended funding expenditures is based on the number of children with IEPs receiving preschool instructional services in the blended classroom. The classroom teacher must have either ECSE certification or EC certification.

18. What are the first steps to take when considering application for an Early Learning Blended Program?

- a. *Assess what the community needs are and what services already exist.*
- b. *Garner support from key individuals who will be part of the blended program to review Early Learning Blended guidance ie. staff responsible for possible funding sources.*
- c. *Develop different program scenarios by accessing the Program Worksheet available on the Early Learning webpage, Blended Programs.*
- d. *Reach consensus on a plan that best supports the needs of children and families.*
- e. *Submit information from the worksheet to the Initial Plan and submit the Initial Budget. The Initial Plan and Budget opens on April 15th and closes **prior to July 1st**.*

If you have additional questions contact the Early Learning section for assistance at 573/751-2095.